

Safeguarding Your Home

In our continuing forum on community safety and crime prevention, we now talk about some ideas to safeguard your home.

When evaluating how secure your home is, ask yourself this question: "If I am locked out of my house, where could I get in without too much difficulty?" The answer(s) to this question likely will lead you to potential problems in your home's security. Such areas should be specifically looked at, and the problems fixed. But remember, even though you want to make it difficult for a burglar to gain entrance into your home, you also must plan to afford you and your family ready exit capability in the event of an emergency.

The days of the "no need to lock the house" are gone. No matter how safe you may feel in your neighborhood, the very real possibility still exists that your home may be targeted for criminal activity. Burglars, no matter how sophisticated, still prefer and look for easy targets. This means homes and buildings which have an unlocked door or window, or which have inadequate locking mechanisms. It may seem rudimentary, but an adequately locked house or building is still one of the best deterrents to burglary. That said, keep the following in mind when evaluating your home's security:

- * Exterior doors should be strong enough to withstand excessive force and be secured with a deadbolt that has a minimum one inch throw with a strike plate that is secured with two to three inch screws.
- * Sliding glass doors and windows should be secure against forcing the locks or being lifted completely out of the frame.
- * Double-hung windows should be secured with pins or extra locks to discourage prying.
- * Peepholes should be on the main entrance door, and should have at least a doorwide (180 degree) view.
- * House numbers should be posted clearly and conspicuously on your house, and be visible from the street both night and day.
- * Shrubbery near your home should be trimmed and maintained so as to not give burglars easy hiding places---particularly shrubs near your homes larger windows and doors of entry.
- * Motion sensitive exterior lighting can serve as an effective deterrent to would be burglars.

By all means, don't hesitate to call in and report any suspicious activity you perceive is occurring on your, or your neighbor's property. Police would rather respond to what turns out to be an unfounded prowler call, than have the real

thing occur and go unreported. Keep in mind, in a city of roughly 6400 people, generally only eleven are police personnel, and on a good night, only three of these eleven may be on duty at a given time. That means that only six eyes could be actively engaged in crime detection and prevention. Collectively as a group of citizens, you have the means to detect crime more readily than a modest complement of police.